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RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3762
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 2982
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2595
RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0707
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 000745

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL, DRL/AWH, EAP/P

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [ID](#) [TT](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S OP-ED PIECE HIGHLIGHTS DEMOCRACY,
HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: A. JAKARTA 702

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 672

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On April 12, The Jakarta Post published an op-ed written by the Ambassador on democracy and human rights in Indonesia. Reactions to the piece have been positive. A key contact from the Office of the President expressed appreciation for the piece, telling the Ambassador that the GOI plans to work with Timor Leste regarding the joint Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF) report and its recommendations. END SUMMARY.

OP-ED IN JAKARTA POST

[1](#)2. (U) On April 12, The Jakarta Post--Indonesia's major English-language daily--published an op-ed piece by Ambassador Hume, entitled, "Indonesia's Journey in Democracy." (See full text of op-ed below.) The commentary commended Indonesia's democratic leadership for some progress in accounting for past human rights abuses. Noting, however, that more needs to be done, the piece suggested that Indonesia should now look confidently ahead to consolidate its reforms.

[1](#)3. (U) The piece specifically addressed the recent acquittal of former militia leader Eurico Guterres (ref A), and the fact that with this decision no one has been held accountable for 1999 gross human rights violations in East Timor. The Ambassador wrote that he expects the CTF report to arrive at credible findings of who was responsible and that the report would "reflect the political will of both governments to account for that tragic period."

POSITIVE REACTION

[1](#)4. (C) President Yudhoyono's chief foreign affairs adviser Dino Patti Djalal contacted the Ambassador the same day the op-ed piece was published to convey the Yudhoyono administration's appreciation for the commentary. Regarding

the CTF, Djalal noted that the GOI fully respects the process. He added that the GOI will implement the report's recommendations and continue to work with East Timor on reconciliation. (Note: Per ref B, President Yudhoyono has been fully briefed on the CTF report, which is expected to contain strong recommendations for follow-up actions by both governments.)

15. (C) Separately, after reading the article, CTF Commissioner Wisber Loeis told DepPol/C that he found the Ambassador's comments positive. Urging the USG to distinguish the Guterres' acquittal from the CTF findings, he said the acquittal "does not mean there have been no gross human rights violations" in East Timor.

16. (C) A leading Indonesian human rights activist told us that the Ambassador's commentary was very helpful in pressing the GOI for progress on accountability. "It underlines our concerns that democracy cannot develop without accountability," Rafendi Djamin, Coordinator of the Human Rights Working Group, told DepPol/C on April 14. The timing of the piece, on the heels of Indonesia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the UN Human Rights Council, could not have been better, said Djamin, who represented the Indonesian human rights community at the UPR in Geneva. Douglas Ramage, head of The Asian Foundation's Jakarta office, told the DCM April 14 that he very much liked the article.

FULL TEXT

17. (U) Following is the full text of the op-ed piece:

Begin text:

Indonesia's Journey in Democracy" by Cameron R. Hume:

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Indonesia is one of the world's remarkable success stories for freedom and democracy. This month Indonesians will hold the latest in a series of local elections conducted since the onset of democracy. The second set of democratic national elections will follow in 2009.

Indonesian media and civil society exercise their watchdog role, battling corruption and crying out against inequities. When one looks at the speed of progress that Indonesia has made over its first decade of democracy, in many ways it exceeds the United States' initial transition into a national democracy over 200 years ago.

Just 10 years ago, Indonesia was crippled by the regional economic crisis. The May 1998 riots wracked the nation. Brutal security forces and corrupt officials had full impunity from justice.

Then, on May 12, 1998, a simple student protest at Trisakti University in Jakarta sparked the amazing transformation of Indonesia into the world's third-largest democracy.

On the world stage, Indonesia is a leader. The United States admires Indonesia's democratic leadership. Indonesia's success at developing democratic institutions shows the way for other nations. Indonesia is leading ASEAN in promoting democracy and human rights.

As a tolerant, diverse nation, Indonesia has a legitimate role in helping other countries striving to reform and make a peaceful democratic transition.

Still, there are challenges. With 245 million people to clothe, feed, educate, and employ, it is understandable that the work of democratic reform always requires more efforts. Indonesians already have a solid and stable democracy but they might not always appreciate what a great society and powerful nation they have. They should now look confidently

ahead to consolidating reformasi to become an even greater nation.

The United States has grappled with human rights abuses in the course of our own democratic development. The U.S. Constitution once legitimized slavery. Women were not granted full voting rights until the 1920s. Equal rights for all Americans were not enshrined in law until the U.S. Congress enacted the civil rights laws of the 1960s.

While injustices persist in our society, our democratic system works towards a just society. American democracy would wither if we did not face up to our past mistakes as a society and deal with them through free speech and rule of law.

Accountability for past human rights abuses will deepen, not threaten, democracy here. Indonesia has taken steps towards accountability. Indonesian police last year disciplined over 16,000 officers. Indonesia opened its doors to the world to appraise its human rights situation, giving access to the UN Rapporteur on Torture and the UN Human Rights Commissioner.

The legal process to solve the murder of human rights activist Munir Said Thalib demonstrates political will and welcoming of transparency at the highest level of government.

However, other steps ought to be taken. With the recent acquittal of the only person still convicted by the East Timor ad hoc human rights tribunal, no one has been held accountable for the massacres, rapes and other gross human rights violations that took place in East Timor.

Soon, the Commission of Truth and Friendship Indonesia-Timor Leste (CTF) will issue its report on the 1999 gross violations of human rights. We expect that the report will have credible findings of who was responsible and in this regard reflect the political will of both governments to

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account for that tragic period. The truth of what happened must be the foundation on which the two neighbors work to ensure that such brutality will never happen again.

During the past ten years, reformasi and democracy have brought Indonesia to a new plateau. Now this nation expects to reach greater heights. Indonesia stands among a community of democratic nations which the world hopes will play a global leadership role.

End text.

HUME